

THE GOBLIN OF THE ICE,—OR CHRISTMAS AT THE NORTH POLE.

A LEGEND OF AN ISLAND IN THE ARCTIC SEA THAT WAS ASTRAY AND HAD BEEN STOLEN.

I.

A HUNDRED leagues north of the Arctic circle, there is an island that has no business there. At least the legend tells us that it was taken there by a famous Goblin, who ambitiously desired a private residence. Further than this we have very little accurate information. It is hardly to be expected, however, that we can have much accurate information about goblins in any case; and, between you and me, the less we have perhaps the better. Yet, about this particular Goblin there is no harm in knowing what the legend tells us, nor in believing it. If there is anything I believe in, it is what everybody else believes in; and since everybody else believes in this legend, I believe in it, certainly; and since the hero of the legend is a goblin, I must, to be consistent, believe in goblins generally. At least, if

doubt should cross my mind at any time, it never would in the Christmas time.

This is my position with respect to the Goblin, and I take it fearlessly, defying contradiction: I believe he found the island in the South, where he was looking for it; I believe he kicked it with his foot to loosen it, and thereby made a deep mark in the side of it, which they call a fiord; I believe he rove a rope in the end of it, and towed it north in the night-time, and before the break of day had made it fast just where it is—a hundred leagues north of the Arctic circle, in the chilly Arctic Sea.

Still, I would not believe a word of this (nor would you) did not the legend so particularly mention it; for it seems incredible that so large an island should be treated so, even by a goblin. The island is more than a

hundred miles long, north and south; quite fifty miles wide, east and west; is one mile high at its highest point, and more than half a mile in at least a dozen places. There never was another island like it, as I believe. It has more tall cliffs, dark caves, deep gorges, roaring rapids, and wonderful waterfalls than anybody would give it credit for, even were they every one mentioned in the minutest manner. But, more than all, the island is covered over with a great white sheet of ice and snow, that is in places hundreds of feet in thickness, from which streams of the same material come pouring or sliding down into the valleys, filling all but one of them almost completely. These streams, or glaciers as they are called, and the icy sea from which they spring, are all (we have the legend for it) the Goblin's work. He could not bear the peace and quiet that he found there; for he loved the cold, he loved the howling winds, and he held high revel in the darkness. He found the island clothed with verdure; happy birds were singing in the trees; butterflies were sipping honey from the flowers, and the island was very beautiful; seeing which he threw abroad a withering frost. He dropped the snows, and holding them from year to year he formed them into ice, until the island was covered with his chilly handiwork.

He fixed his throne on Linmark's fjeld, the loftiest mountain peak. Between the foot of this and another mountain peak there was a valley that annoyed him greatly. This was the valley already mentioned, into which the streams of ice had not descended. It was the only part of the island that he could not master. He sent the glaciers down, but they would not stay. They melted and ran into the sea, the various streams united forming Rothe River. In the winter-time he had his way to some extent, for the snows he dropped lay in the valley; but no ice would ever stay there, and his breath would scarcely ever reach it, and even then but lightly. When the summer came the snows *would* disappear, and the valley *would* grow green, in spite of him. The flowers bloomed and threw abroad their fragrance; the little trees put forth their foliage; the sparrows came and chirruped among their branches; the butter-

flies were gay and thoughtless, and the bees were gathering honey all the day.

So the Goblin could not altogether do away with the island's southern character. The valley bid defiance to his skill and power, but he watched it closely; and while he watched, some human beings came to live there.

They were Danes; and despite the efforts that the Goblin made to thin them off, they lived in peace and happiness for many and many a year. They built a little village, and prospered in their quiet way. Game was abundant in the valley, and fish were plenty in the sea; while as for clothing, bread and wine, and other necessary comforts and conveniences, they had them as they wished, once a year, by ship from Denmark.

In course of time there came to visit them a young man from Copenhagen, who was a student, and a famous traveller. He was about thirty years of age, and his appearance altogether was attractive. His hair was light; his complexion fair, though weather-beaten; his features regular, and his figure graceful. You would at sight like everything about him but his eye, which was a most decided gray; and an eye of that description you never like unless you have to; for you fancy, without exactly knowing why, that its owner is not a man you would care to pin your faith to.

As the ship which bore him approached the island, a furious storm came sweeping down upon her. "See here," said the captain of the ship, "Paul Peverell, the Goblin's after you;" and the captain buttoned up his coat and looked uneasy.

Paul asked, "What goblin?"

"The Goblin of the Ice, up there on Linmark's fjeld," replied the captain.

"So that tall mountain is the Linmark's fjeld, and in those driving clouds which seem to link the mountain with the sky is where the Goblin lives; eh, captain?"

"Such is the legend, Paul."

"What does he do?" asked Paul, his eye fixed on the mountain-top.

The captain looked aloft, at the same time pointing with his finger; and it must have been a skeptical man indeed who could have doubted that the Goblin had sent a chilly storm away upon the sea to catch the ship,



HE TOWED IT NORTH IN THE NIGHT-TIME.

and was even then weaving a web of crystals about her, stiffening every rope and sail. But Paul *was* skeptical.

As the people on the ship looked on the mountain, they were confident they saw something like a human face of vast proportions fashioned in the clouds of drifting snow. Paul laughed at them.

The storm, though violent, was not of long duration, and did no serious damage to the ship or crew, further than to make them uncomfortable. They reached their port, after some delay, to the great joy of the villagers, and Paul went at once ashore, never thinking of goblins, but only of the purpose that had fetched him there. That purpose he had not mentioned to the captain, nor to anybody. He had come to see and climb that very Linmark's fjeld of which the captain spoke, and of which he had heard strange stories from his boyhood. And why should he not? Had he not climbed the great Hartz Mountains, where the Wilde Jäger winds his horn and hunts with his spectral pack? In the forest of Fontainebleau had he not listened for St. Herbert without hearing him? And had he not met with many strange adventures in many places? Now his ambition would be filled. Here, according to a legend as well established as any German legend ever was, dwelt the very spirit of the cold, whose substance was the ice and snow; his breath the wintry storms; the friend of night; the enemy of the cheerful fireside; whose powers extended to the human heart, which he could chill to the very fibres that send the warm blood rushing through the joyous body; whose ambition reached throughout the world, and was insatiable.

Paul Peverell would explore the island; he would climb the mountain; and in another book (he had written many) he would describe what he had seen for the benefit of science, and explode another fiction for the service of mankind in general.

II.

PAUL made his way immediately to the Governor's house, tapped briskly at the door, which in a moment was opened by a neat and lively person, whom he mistook for a boy, but

who proved to be a girl; and in truth she was dressed so strangely that she might have been mistaken for a boy without offence. She wore boots that reached above the knees (white and very dainty), made of skins that had been well tanned, and then bleached in the winter air. She was not encased in crinoline and skirts, but wore pantaloons of mottled seal-skins, ornamented tastefully with cunning needlework. Her body was covered with a jacket of bright cloth, lined inside with fawn skins, and trimmed around the neck and wrists and lower edge with fur and some ornaments of beads. Her hair was black as the raven's feathers, and her eyes were blue as the sky when breaking through the summer cloud. Her complexion was a rich brunette; and as for teeth, they were so pure and perfect that pearls and ivory would be nowhere in comparison; and they showed so finely when she exclaimed "I ain't a boy!"

Paul would have made apology for his blunder, but she gave him no time. "My name," she said, "is Tabita; please tell me yours."

Of course Paul told her. Then she said she would inform the Governor, and conducted him at once into the house. From the vestibule he passed into a well-furnished billiard-room, which made Paul fairly stare to see so great a luxury *there*. Then he passed into a comfortable dining-room, where pictures of fruits and flowers were hanging on the wall, and from that into a parlor which quite astonished him. In fact, Paul had never ceased to be astonished from the moment he first came in sight of Linmark's fjeld—astonished at the scenery that was so grand; at the town that looked so quaint and satisfied; at the girl who appeared so like a boy; and now, more than all, at the interior of the house where the girl was leading him. It was so fresh and cozy. The parlor was as neatly furnished as a parlor need be anywhere. Books were strewn around in great profusion; an open piano, with great quantities of music piled upon it, stood in one corner; a guitar was in another; and in the windows, partly hidden behind curtains of spotless whiteness, were sweet flowers that sent their perfume through the room.

He had scarcely time, however, to look about him before the door opened and a lady entered. She was young and graceful, and her face, though dark for a Danish girl, was fresh and lovely. She introduced herself at once as Annie Vardsen, the Governor's daughter.

As unprepared as Paul had been to find so cheerful a house there, he was still less prepared to meet such a lady to grace it. Another lady came in soon afterward, to add to his surprise, with a little baby on her arm, and a cheery smile of welcome on her face. Her husband, the Governor, would be in directly. The baby, meanwhile, was introduced as Elizabeth, and Paul caressed it as in duty, if not in pleasure, bound. Then, while the baby was passing round, Tabita brought in some wine and lunch upon a tray, and, while engaged with these, the Governor, a genial and intelligent man of middle age, joined the group. Then Paul had a great budget of news to unfold from the great world on the other side of the Arctic circle, of which they heard so rarely. The recital not being ended when the dinner hour arrived, he stayed to dinner. Supper found him still occupied in the same way, and he spent the evening, during which, what with his own talking, Annie Vardsen's music, a game of billiards, and some refreshments such as Danes (who are perfection in hospitality) never fail to have, he enjoyed himself as much as he was capable of enjoying anything in a social way. When at length he went on board his ship, it was near the middle of the night; yet the sun was still shining, and a glorious purple hue was on the hills, while their shadow rested coldly on the village, which seemed to be as quiet as if the midnight sun was not shining and the air had been dark.

Paul found himself so agreeably entertained at the Governor's house after his wearisome voyage, that he passed the following day there. He had many hours' conversation with the Governor's daughter; sometimes they were together quite alone. She sung and played for him, and, for the time (strange thing for Paul), he forgot all about the Linmark's fjeld. She had not always lived, she said, beneath the shadow of that cruel mountain, for her father had sent her home four years to be educated.



IN THE GOBLIN'S STORM.

They were getting on famously together when the door was opened and another lady entered, whom Annie Vardsen introduced, saying to Paul, "We are old schoolmates, and the dearest friends. She is a niece of Chief Factor Lansen, and has come to spend a year or so with her relations; but more than all to see me. Eh, Ida?"

The lady bowed very stiffly to Paul, and almost turned her back upon him, to Annie's great embarrassment. He bowed stiffly in return, and soon afterward went away.

If a ghost had risen from the ground, or the Goblin of the Ice in all his glory had stood forth on Linmark's fjeld, Paul could not have been more surprised than he was when Ida Lansen came into the room; for he knew her well, and the recognition was therefore mutual. He could not help wondering, as he went down to the beach (to pick up shells), how she ever came to cross his path in that distant quarter of the world. In a few hours he returned; but by this time Ida Lansen was the last person in his thoughts. Annie Vardsen met him pleasantly as before, and was much delighted when Paul explained the different characters of the shells he brought, and told their names.

As soon as she found an opportunity she said, in explanation of the conduct of her friend: "Ida is very diffident; you must excuse her."

"Oh, certainly," said Paul.

"She had heard that you had come in the ship, but she did not know you were here."

"Oh, certainly," said Paul again. "A very pretty girl is Miss Lansen." And he went on with his shells, while Annie Vardsen listened, and was happy while he talked. Why, it would perhaps have puzzled her to tell. Was it because she so rarely saw a visitor? or was it because the visitor was learned and famous? or because he was tall, good-looking, and intelligent? It might have been; but certainly it was not because Paul manifested any special admiration for her more than courtesy required.

Did he feel none? Ah! who can tell? His cold gray eyes were speechless, and his manner to her, as to everybody else, was formal, and as hard as the very ice on Linmark's fjeld.

At times Miss Vardsen even thought he seemed unconscious of her presence. Yet he did not leave, notwithstanding his apparent indifference, but spent another evening in the Governor's house, where, besides the family and Tabita, were the captain of the ship, the priest, the factor with his wife, and Fred their son, and Ida Lansen their niece, which young lady managed to pass the evening without speaking to Paul a word that she could possibly avoid; a circumstance which did not, however, seem to disturb him, for he was not more cold and formal to her than to the rest of the company. Ida sang and Annie played, and while the hours of this strange, sunlit night were passing, Paul found himself wondering if all was real;—away up here among the polar frosts, where for a space of fifty days in winter the glorious sun is never seen—to find this happiness, contentment, and this quiet comfort that he saw. He wondered if a loud laugh would not blow it all away, and wake him from a dream. The loud laugh came, but the scene remained, and the laugh was only at his wonder.

"Could not people be happy anywhere, and comfortable besides?" asked everybody when Paul's surprise was fully understood.

"O yes, of course," said he. "I see all that; but I would not have believed it, otherwise."

Tabita smiled (a timid little smile it was)

and said, "I'll tell you why we are happy here. It is because we are protected by a Spirit."

"Oh! that is it," replied Paul, smiling quite incredulously. "Then you believe in spirits, Tabita?"

Yes, that she did, and so did everybody.

Paul appealed to all the ladies. They all agreed with quiet Tabita. And the Governor? He believed in what the ladies did, of course. And did they all believe in goblins? Certainly. The one on Linmark's fjeld, that he had heard so much about? Him above all others.

"What then, Tabita, do you call this good spirit that protects you?"

"The Spirit of the Valley," said the girl; "the spirit that keeps it green and warm, and lets no cold and cruel thing ever come to chill it, or to chill the hearts that are so happy here."

All of which was to Paul quite inexplicable. He had no faith whatever in goblins, imps, or fairy creatures of any sort. He believed, however, in Paul Peverell thoroughly; and, besides, he believed in rocks, because he could analyze them, and in flowers, because he could name and classify them, like boys at school—they never, of themselves, having the least discretion as to where they go. In this manner he loved Nature, and was very busy with her.

Later in the evening, after this conversation had ended, a youth came in whom the Governor introduced to Paul as Carl Lively, "though better known as Lively Carl."

He was a good-looking, rather awkward, light-complexioned fellow, whom anybody could see with half an eye was in love with Tabita. The girl blushed when he stood beside her, for she knew that she was observed.

"Do go away," she said, with some impatience. "Don't you see they look at us."

No, Carl did not see it. He had no eyes for anything but Tabita, and he would not obey her. So she ran blushing from the room and left him vexed and ill at ease.

Paul took a liking to Tabita's favorite instantly. His frank, open face would please even a colder-mannered man than Paul (if one could possibly be found). It was a real Danish face, full of earnest impulse. Paul's



THE GALDRAGEN'S WARNING.

face was Danish too, in form and color, but there the resemblance ended; for you could not look into Paul's face and imagine for an instant that he ever had an impulse. It was very natural, however, that Carl should take an unbounded fancy to a man so different from himself as Paul, who spoke to him, after Tabita had gone, in a very kindly manner, as it seemed to Carl, considering they were perfect strangers to each other an hour before.

"You seem to be a general favorite here, Carl," said Paul, quite familiarly.

"Oh, thank you, sir," Carl stammered out.

"Have you been here long, if I may ask?"

"Not very long, for I am young, you see; but I was born here."

"Indeed! Then you are just the man I want to see. I came to make some explorations of this island, and I want a guide, or rather an intelligent companion that can help me."

Carl was greatly flattered, and with the Governor's leave, of course, he would go with him anywhere.

"Oh, is that all? I thought, perhaps, we

would have to ask that pretty girl, whom everybody sees is in love with you." And, with this bright piece of news for Carl, he went to the Governor with the air of one who never expects to ask for anything without obtaining it. He came back presently and said it was all arranged, and the two took their leave together;—the one, after being flattered by some more questions concerning himself and the girl he loved, to go home and fret himself about Tabita's being cross with him; the other to go on board his ship and think over projects for the morrow. Of one thing more he thought—it was of Annie Vardsen; of Ida Lansen too, and he muttered to himself, "Well, she was cool enough! and I rather like her for it."

III.

TABITA was a wonderful girl, in the estimation of the people of the village. The only fault that anybody ever found with her was her well-known intimacy

with a woman who lived apart from the other villagers. It was no great matter, to be sure, but there was something mysterious about the association which the gossips could not unravel.

Opinion was divided as to whether this woman was quite human, or rather, whether she was not something more than human. Some thought her a real witch, while all conceded that she could look into futurity, and foretell what was to happen. She was called by everybody "The Galdraken," meaning something more than "Seer"—one who accomplished everything by mysterious means, and who had such control of unseen things that it was never safe to have her enmity. Paul met her in the outskirts of the village early next morning when he came ashore to look up Lively Carl. She was dressed in a strange manner, in a costume much composed of fur, that was neither man's nor woman's. She appeared to be looking for him, as indeed she was, and when they had met she spoke to him in an inflated manner, pointing at the same time with her finger to the lofty mountain, which, though visible, was yet

partly enveloped in wreaths of drifting snow. These were her words:—

"On Linmark's fjeld the eye may see
The streaming hair of Ranamee:
Whoever meets with him in strife
Will miss his aim, or lose his life;
For thus the prophecy is read.
Wise men are warned! enough is said."

"Quite enough," Paul thought to himself, "unless the meaning were a little more clear, and the speech more to the purpose." Then he looked down from the mountain, which had particularly excited his curiosity on account of the wild condition of weather which seemed to be prevailing, and was about to address the strange being who accosted him, when he discovered that she was no longer there. Nor could he see her anywhere. Lively Carl coming up presently, he asked him concerning her: "Did you see that mumbling hag, Carl?"

Carl had seen her; but he spoke with much reserve, which still further mystified Paul.

"What is the Ranamee?" he asked.

"Oh, that," replied Carl, "is the evil spirit up there, that, they say, can freeze our hearts out. The Goblin of the Ice, they say he is. Tabita knows, and the Galdraken."

"The Galdraken! that is this old woman, eh?"

"That's her name, and she knows a heap more than you think she does," explained Carl. Then lowering his voice to a whisper, he said: "She knows what we are thinking about."

"Umph!" Paul muttered; "and that's the way she discovered that I would go on Linmark's fjeld, is it?" Then to Carl he said: "I've a mind to climb the mountain and have a look at this Goblin. Will you go with me?"

"I—I don't exactly know about that," replied Carl, eying Paul closely, and wondering whether he was really in earnest.

"Why, you're not afraid?" said Paul, with such a reproachful tone of voice that Carl's spirit was touched, and he answered promptly: "As for that, Mr. Peverell, I'm not more afraid than another man."

"The other man is me, and I am not

afraid at all; so we will go at once, and this shall be your first service as my guide and fellow-traveler."

Lively Carl looked anything but lively then; but seeing that he was fairly in for it, he turned pale and blushed in turn, and then stammered out that "if Mr. Peverell was not afraid, certainly, of course, he was not; and he would go with Mr. Peverell if the devil himself were there."

"Good," said Paul; "then give me your hand upon it; and here are ten rix-bank dollars to bind the bargain in a business way."

The bargain concluded, Carl pleaded something to do, which would employ him only a short time, before he would be ready to start, and he rushed away to see Tabita, whom he found at home in a little house the Governor had built for her and her mother; and there never was a house more tidy. Its three rooms were none of them carpeted; but the floors were scoured so brightly, the pots and pans in her little kitchen had such a glitter on them, and the furniture had such a polish, that your eyes were set to blinking the moment you entered the door. There were some colored prints and photographs, simply framed,



"DON'T GO, DEAR CARL!"

hanging against the walls as prim and neat as possible; and altogether everything was so perfect in its way that you could no more help falling in love with Tabita's house than with Tabita herself.

Carl was very proud, as well he might be, that he could come there sometimes. He was never so glad, however, as when he found her, as in the present instance, sitting by the open window, sewing. His manner was not, however, so cordial as usual, and without any preliminary explanation he told her of his purpose to climb the Linmark's fjeld with Paul Peverell. If his intention was to pay her off in lover fashion for being severe with him, and for refusing him the word he wanted so much to hear, he succeeded perfectly. She grew pale at the announcement, for it filled her with alarm and dread. "Don't go, dear Carl!" she exclaimed, rather than requested.

Here was a confession for him! She had never called him dear Carl before; and it is much to be feared that the fellow was not so sorry for her alarm as he should have been. But when she said tenderly, and with a coaxing smile, "Dear Carl, don't go, please don't, but stay at home with me!" he was quite overpowered.

With her! O happiness! He was rapturous with joy, and about to say he would obey her wish, of course he would, when he remembered that he had passed his word to Paul, and then he turned pale at the answer he was forced to make. Oh, that promise! What *did* he make it for? But he had to speak at last. With Tabita's trembling hands on his, and with a voice trembling still more, he said: "Dear Tabita, I am very sorry. I did not think you would care about it so. I've promised, Tabita; and—why, don't you see I've promised; and—then, don't you see I must." Then he added, with more firmness, "You know the old Danish proverb, Tabita, 'A man and a word.' What would become of me if I broke my word?"

"But the Ranamee! the Ranamee!" exclaimed the anxious girl.

Carl, not altogether liking her apparent indifference to his honorable feeling, straightened himself to his loftiest height (it was not

very great) and said: "Tabita, I fear the Ranamee and all the goblins less than the evil that would come to me with a broken word."

Tabita did not know about the "word," but she said she was afraid to have him go, and wondered that he was not afraid himself to go.

"Me afraid?" replied Carl, vehemently, "why, what should I be afraid of?" But seeing that he was alarming her more and more, he lowered his voice, and thrusting his head far through the window he continued: "Dear Tabita, I am not afraid of anything, unless it is that Tabita don't love her Lively Carl as much as Carl loves Tabita." Whereupon Tabita kissed her ardent lover on his weather-beaten cheek, and dropped a tear there while she did it. Then she said he "was a very foolish fellow for talking so."

"Indeed!" said Lively Carl, quite astonished; "why, then, if foolishness is always so well rewarded, I'll be foolish all my life, and never ask for wisdom." And in return for her quick assault upon him, he kissed her fairly on the lips!

And so in presence of the dreaded Goblin, the terror of whose name had lifted up the flood-gates, and let their young affection freely flow, their mutual love was confessed and ratified. But still Carl could not stay, and the confession of Tabita proved useless for the end she wished to gain. Carl *must* go. He was very sorry, but he must. His word, his word! and he bowed his head and walked away, while Tabita, trembling with alarm, watched him going down the path, feeling desolate. But hope was not all lost. Tabita was brave, and she would save her lover yet.

While Lively Carl was thus employed, Paul thought, instead of waiting there for his guide he might as well drop in at the Governor's, and see Annie Vardsen, which he did accordingly. He found her alone, sitting at the piano, looking the very picture of health and lively spirits; but when Paul told her of his purpose the bright color vanished from her cheeks, and she said impulsively, "Don't go, I beg of you."

"Why not?" asked Paul, with excited curiosity.

"Because I am afraid to have you go," she answered, in the simple ardor of her feelings.

"Of what?"

"You've heard the legend of the Linmark, have you not?"

"Oh yes, some nonsense or other I have heard about it, but that is nothing."

"It is dangerous," she said.

"Oh, that is nothing either."

"For your sake, I would not have you go."

"For my sake! Oh that is less than nothing, for you cannot care for me."

The girl, who had said so much—too much, and yet too little—turned away her head to hide her own confusion, and then, feeling she must say something, repeated her former words: "Don't go, I beg of you."

"Don't go, dear Carl," Tabita was at that very moment saying to her lover!

IV.

LIKE all selfish and ambitious men, Paul Peverell was not easily turned from his purposes. He had come to climb the Linmark's fjeld, and he would do it. But when he got outside the Governor's house he found himself troubled (a rare circumstance to him) with a little irresolution. Finding Carl, he bade him go on to the valley; he would meet him there within an hour. The truth is, he had a mind just then to be alone. His head was full of Annie Vardsen, and the request she had made of him. He would collect his thoughts on the sandy beach, with the great rollers pounding at his feet, and set off at once.

He had not gone far before his resolution was formed. "I am a fool," he said, "to hesitate. I will go back to Annie Vardsen and see what effect it will have upon her if I tell her that I have given up my wild project because she asked me to." While saying this he was hastening to find Carl, that he might release him for the day.

How happy would Tabita have been had she known this change of plan! How happy, too, would Annie Vardsen have been, and poor Lively Carl! and how different this tale had been! But no one knew it save Paul himself, and least of all did Ida Lansen.

Paul had to mount a ledge of rocks, as the path led over it, and when he came near he saw to his surprise a lady moving along the

crest above, and when she approached nearer she began to descend. He hastened forward to assist her; but she did not need help, and apparently did not desire it even in courtesy.

As she sprang from the last step Paul stood close beside her; but before he could speak she had thrown back her vail, and he was face to face with the lady who had treated him so coolly at the Governor's. Paul merely expressed surprise to see her.

"I would not be surprised," she answered, "to see Paul Peverell in any place except" (her breath was coming and going very rapidly with agitation and rapid walking), "except where he might think of others than himself. That *would* surprise me."

"Very likely," said Paul, quite unmoved. "But tell me, Miss Lansen, why you meet me in this strange wild place, for I cannot suppose this meeting is by accident."

"I came," she answered, "to plead with you for one whom your neglect has made unhappy,—your brother."

"Where is he now?" inquired Paul.

"At a village fifty miles from here, where he has come with the brave hope that by economy and toil he may be able to fulfill his wish."

"Which is to marry Ida Lansen?"

"It is: and I am proud to own that he loves me now as faithfully as ever."

"What can I do?"

"Be reconciled to him; give him his rights, and free him from his present poverty."

"He has no rights that I am interfering with," replied Paul, with great deliberation. "If I share my moderate fortune with him it is a bounty. I have educated him, and any part of the family inheritance which may go to him is conditional upon his obedience to my plans, which he has disregarded. I cannot see it otherwise, as I have told you once before."

"Then it is because you are blinded by your selfish disregard of every natural claim," exclaimed the girl, with growing warmth; "blinded by your insatiable ambition, and your cold indifference to everything but what promotes it." And the girl, so bold in coming there, so thoughtless, really, of herself, and yet so hopeful of a great happiness, began to

tremble, feeling how powerless she was, as this cold man fixed his hard gray eyes upon her and said, in answer to her reproachful words :—

"Miss Lansen, you who are so unselfish" (and here he smiled most cruelly) "know well the price that is to pay for what you ask, and you alone can pay it."

"Renounce him?"

"Yes."

"No, never!" was her firm, defiant answer. "Never will I renounce Jens, were he a hundred times your brother, and you wished it even a thousand times more than you do. Never until he tells me that you have made the heartless offer to him, and *he* has accepted it."

"You would do it then?"

"Yes, cold and cruel man, I would. But he will not, for he loves me. Poor though he is, and may be always, I will love him while I live." And now, with all her hopes quite crushed, and with the feeling that she could not speak another word without completely breaking down before the man whom she hated utterly, and with reason, she glided from beneath his cold gaze, and hastened down the path.

Paul watched her until she had passed out of sight, when he climbed the ledge of rocks and went his way; but, schooled in hardness and indifference though he was, he could not keep those words of Ida Lansen's from running through his mind, "Cold and cruel," and he seemed to hear them muttered in his ear. He would have said anywhere that it was the Galdraken speaking to him, but when he looked about he saw nobody.

"Why this is strange," he thought; "the place is surely haunted, or that Galdraken is a witch." Then he laughed to think he had even for a moment entertained the thought. Afterward he fell to thinking about his plans. "This meeting alters them. Ida no doubt has told Miss Vardsen what a heartless fellow I am; and now what a very dunce I would have been had I returned;" upon arriving at which conclusion he hastened on to find the Lively Carl, this time resolved to climb the Linmark's fjeld, as he had first intended.

Ida soon reached the Governor's house, with

her indignation a little cooled; but still a flush of anger was on her cheek, and a flash was in her eye, as she sat beside the window in Annie Vardsen's room, looking very beautiful. Hers was a thorough Danish beauty—Danish in her golden hair, her light blue eyes, and fair complexion; Danish in her plump, fresh figure; and, as we have seen already, Danish in her sense of honor and her love of truth and constancy.

But if she was a perfect Danish girl she was yet a woman; and could not therefore keep a secret from a friend she loved. Why she had gone to meet Paul Peverell, what she said to him, why she had been cold to him when she first met him—all came out.

Poor Annie Vardsen! What was she to think of all this story that her friend was telling her? But still, if her heart owned to itself that it had been touched, it was not deep enough, perhaps, to make a wound. She laughed at Ida's earnestness. Then they were summoned down to lunch, and the Governor and Miss Vardsen heard just what was necessary they should know of Paul's affairs. They had a jest at Annie Vardsen's expense; for they one and all declared that Annie's heart was a little tender towards the handsome stranger. If Annie did not own to it with her tongue (indeed she indignantly denied that she cared for him at all), yet she blushed suspiciously.

But where was Tabita this while? She was in the valley seeking Carl, thinking that he and Paul had gone before, and were ahead of her. She was going to speak to Paul very plainly about taking her lover off on such hazardous adventures, little dreaming that two other girls were turning this cool, self-willed Paul first one way, then the other, undoing his plans for him. Not finding them, and being much alarmed for Carl, she thought of the Galdraken, and hurried to her for help.

v.

THE Galdraken lived some distance up the valley, very near the glacier which Paul and Carl were preparing to climb. From this glacier, as we have seen before, there comes a river which, tearing down over jagged rocks in grand rapids, and leaping from ledge to



TABITA AT THE WITCH'S HUT.

ledge, forms at last a noble fall. The rock about the fall is cut in all directions by deep and gloomy clefts, through which the water rushes. There are, therefore, many islands. On one of these the Galdraken had her residence.

Few people ever came to disturb her there in that wild haunt. Whatever the Galdraken might be or might not be, the villagers were generally content to leave her undisturbed, according to her own desire. They came there only to ask advice of her, or to be cured of some disease, bringing presents of fuel, food, and clothing, which they left upon the threshold.

Belief in her prophetic wisdom was very general; and the most pious people of the village were not at times above asking aid of her. She possessed some simple remedies by which she cured the sick, and she could set a broken bone as well as any surgeon in the world, who was altogether human.

The hut in which she lived was quite large. It was divided into mysterious chambers,

which no one was ever known to have seen the inside of, and which, according to the popular belief, were peopled with supernatural beings. There was an outer chamber, which might be called a vestibule, that projected from the main body of the hut, and into this visitors were admitted; but beyond this no one ever passed, and bold would have been the man who even asked the privilege.

The walls of this singular abode seemed to have been designed by nature especially for the purpose. The space was quite enclosed, except in front. It was thought by some that human hands had never touched it, but that unseen fingers had roofed it in and covered it with turf, in which the willow bushes grew as in the valley everywhere. But for the door, no one would have known that a hut was there.

The island was reached by a cunningly-devised drawbridge, which, being lowered, made access quite impossible, since the chasm which it spanned was quite a hundred feet in depth and ten or twelve feet wide. A rash man

might attempt to jump across it; but the rocks were so rugged that he would be very likely to lose his footing, and be hurled down into the torrent which was at all times rushing through the cleft below—for the island was in fact fairly encircled by the fall, although the greater body of the water was on the opposite side from the cleft spanned by the bridge.

Tabita reached the spot, and, calling to the Galdraken, asked if she might pass the bridge. There was no answer, but the bridge was raised by an unseen hand, and Tabita stepped upon it, not, however, without timidity.

When she had passed the bridge was lowered, but this did not disturb her purpose. Reaching the door of the hut she knelt before it, and tapping gently, called, "Good mother! will you admit me?"

A voice as if from the remotest chamber of the hut answered: "The spirits will tell what the dark-haired maiden seeks. The Galdraken will consult them. Enter."

Tabita, acting upon this gracious permission, found herself in a small dark chamber, where the light of heaven never came. There was a smouldering fire upon the hearth, which threw a ghastly light into the room; but there was no window, nor was there any furniture. A projecting angle of the wall supplied her with a seat, and there in the silence, broken only by the roar of falling waters, she awaited the Galdraken's will. Meanwhile this supernatural creature, as Tabita formerly believed her to be, called to the spirits of the air in a measured monotone, and, without delay, there came an answer as if from the very fall itself. The voice was not new to her; it was the Spirit of the Valley singing:—

"The storm-clouds sweep wild o'er the crest of Linmark,
Where the summer is drear and the winter is dark;
There the Goblin in tempest keeps watch on the hill,
But the Spirit of Peace has her home by the rill,
Where the wild flowers bloom in the valley of green;
They are mine! they are mine! of the valley I'm queen!

"Here true-lovers come on the long summer's day,
And, roaming the valley, are happy and gay;
All true-lovers cling to their sweethearts and me,
And they are all mine, and none parted shall be;
While the wild flowers bloom in the valley of green,
They are mine! they are mine! of the valley I'm queen!"

Which was enough for Tabita. She knew the ways of the "Valley Queen" and the habits of the Galdraken too well to remain longer. The latter words of the song conveyed to her a positive assurance that she would not be separated from her Lively Carl, whatever might be the reference to the fortunes of other lovers. "Thanks, good mother!" she exclaimed, and leaving behind her a fine, soft seal-skin cloak lined with rich warm fur, she retired from the hut. Finding the bridge up ready for her, she crossed over and pursued her way toward the village, comforting herself that Carl would be prevented from going up to Linmark's fjeld; an assurance the more gratifying that a fearful storm was raging there, while all was quiet, peace, and sunshine in the valley.

Paul and Carl had before this met, and the two set off together, much, however, against the will of the latter, who was thinking constantly of Tabita. Still, he showed no flinching, and led the way up a ravine that opened to the glacier. Thenceforward their track was to be explored by themselves.

They were pursuing their way leisurely, and were gradually nearing an immense cliff, when their ears were suddenly startled by a loud report. An enormous quantity of rock had become detached from the cliff directly in front of them, and fragments of various sizes came whizzing through the air, and rolling down the declivity,—before they could reach an angle of the ravine, where they were in a measure sheltered.

This avalanche had so disturbed the hill-side that it was very unsafe to travel in the direction they had started, for stones were flying through the air continually. Accordingly, when it was at all prudent to leave their shelter, they descended to the valley which they had left, intending to proceed a half a mile farther, and effect the ascent at a greater distance from the cliff. This brought them across the path which Tabita was following towards the village, and here they met. It might have made even a colder heart than Paul Peverell's beat a little faster to see Tabita rush into her lover's arms, in the ecstasy of her delight.

"Dear Carl, I am so glad you are safe!"

"Dear Tabita, where have you been?"

These were the exclamations which escaped the lovers when they had recovered breath. Then, seeing Paul, Tabita, with little ceremony, asked him how he could be so cruel as to take Carl away from her on such a dangerous journey.

Paul made light of her fears; but Tabita, while clinging to Carl, declared he *should* not go. Carl would have spoken, but she found a way to silence him.

"Well, well," laughed Paul, when he saw how matters stood, "Carl shall not go with me on any account. Had I known you were so afraid to have him go, I would never have asked him. But he has shown me the way, and I will go on alone, while you, my pretty girl, shall take Carl home." And with this he rose to leave. But Tabita tried to stop him.

"Don't you go either!" she said, in a pleading tone, and with a very gentle voice. "Please don't go."

"Is it the Goblin you're afraid of?" he inquired.

"Oh, everything," she exclaimed. "I heard the avalanche, and that is a warning, if you needed any."

"Think you that was the Goblin's work? I thought he only dealt in ice and snow," Paul said; and then, without another word, he turned from them and started on his course, looking not back, but straight before him, at the mountain-top.

VI.

UP and up Paul climbed, through dangerous passes among the rugged rocks, and over streams rushing madly down through narrow gorges—up, up, up, as if his life were nothing, and his ambition everything.

He soon left all signs of vegetation far below him, and still he climbed. He passed from the rocky hill-side beneath the cliff, and reached the glacier; the madly rushing streams, the narrow gorges, and dangerous passes were no longer seen, as he climbed on up the steep acclivity of ice and snow; and he heard no more a voice murmuring in his ear, "Cold and cruel!" but an old familiar voice saying, "On, climb on!"

And on he climbed. No mortal man had ever yet set foot on Linmark's fjeld, and he, Paul Peverell, would stand upon the icy crest, and there defy all spirits, good or evil, who would deny his coming. He climbed on through the sunshine, and met the storm. The wind was driving fiercely, but he did not heed it. The air grew cold, but he had a quenchless fire within that kept him warm. The wind he neither felt nor heard; no other sound disturbed his ear but the solitary voice, "On, climb on!"

He reached a cloud that swept along the mountain side, but he passed on through it, and leaving it below him as he had left all signs of vegetation long before, he mounted steadily upward until he met at length great streams of drifting snow—hard crystal that rattled on his clothes and cut his flesh, but still he did not pause nor turn his back. His tongue was parched with thirst; but he felt no weariness while he listened to the voice, "On, climb on!"

The cold grew more and more intense as he mounted higher in the air; the streams of drifting snow increased in force and volume, coming from the vast and boundless plain of whiteness, in the midst of which he was the only living thing. They broke in circles round about him, and whirling away above his head they died in space; but still he heeded not their force nor heard their moan, as he listened to the guiding voice, "On, climb on!"

And on and on he climbed, until he reached the summit of his hopes—upon the crest of Linmark's fjeld he stood at last, where man had never dared to go; and now the voice no longer called to him, "On, climb on," but he heard instead the doleful voices of the air; he heard the snow-clouds whirling round him, and the shrieking winds, which he had failed to hear before. All else had vanished, and the universe was void, for that voice had been the universe to him. It had filled his ear through many years of wandering to and fro about the world, and now that it was gone from him he was lost with his ambition full—lost in the cloud, lost in the storm, lost in himself. The void was full of terrors; and faint with thirst, and lack of food, and the strain he had put upon his body, he fell upon

the ice; and away upon the shrieking wind was borne the feeble cry, "What have I gained?"

And the voice came back to him, as if it were an echo, and from the air on every side a loud "Ha, ha!"

Then the snow-cloud whirling round him took shape; and eyes that dripped great icicles were peering at him. A hideous face was fashioned in the tumult, with streaming hair and beard of frost; and wings were there that glittered, and claws that were transparent; and a body, clothed with shining scales, that trailed away into the vastness of the cloud. And round about this hideous shape forms infinite in number, before, above, below, on every side of it, were visible, and as they swept away in boundless space they shrieked as if in mockery of him.

He tried to rouse himself; he tried to drive those phantom shapes away by an effort of the will; but there they were, and there they circled, narrowing and widening their path in very wantonness, shouting in chorus all the while "Ha, ha."

He tried to speak; his voice could only whisper out the anguish of his soul. "Tell me, Spirit of the ice and snow and wintry storms, for I am now convinced of thy existence; tell me, great minister of all the evil that comes upon the world with cold and night, what have I gained by reaching to thy throne at last?"

And again the voices shrieked "Ha, ha!"

And the Spirit answered him: "The full measure of thy wish. Thou hast kept thy faith with me, and this is thy reward,—to see me face to face. I have enticed thee here, and thou hast given up thy soul to me thy whole life long. Thy life is cold, thy ways are cold, thy hopes are cold; and never one disturbing thought of doing good comes to give thy icy heart a throb. Thy means are never given to the poor, thy time is never for the sick, thy sympathies are not with suffering. Neglect of every kindly action to thy fellow-beings has marked thy whole career, and thou hast, in thy superiority, forgotten everything but thy own selfish purposes and the voice that I have sent to guide thee hither. That voice has followed thee about the world, and has whispered always in thy ear, 'On, climb on!' But now

the voice has gone from thee. Thou shalt never hear it more, for thou hast no need of it. This is all my work. While thou hast triumphed, so have I. Thy cold and cruel life has made thee famous among thy fellow-men, for thou hast never turned aside for anything, nor turned thy back. Friends who would have loved thee thou hast neglected; those who have served thee thou hast not rewarded with thy gratitude; thy very brother languishes in poverty and hopeless toil, and thou hast not so much as thought of him, or of the faithful one whose only wish is to see him happy. Again I say, this is my work, and thou hast gained thy will—the power of forgetfulness—forgetfulness of everything save thyself."

The Goblin ceased to speak, and the loud laugh which he had heard before resounded through space, until the forms which he had seen melted in the distance, and the Goblin and his infinite host were gone.

A great white cloud lay along the mountain side, and, stretching away above the land and sea, covered everything but the mountain top. The winds had ceased, and there was a calm more fearful than the storm itself; for what can be more fearful than the death of nature?—that deep, deep silence where the voices of the air are hushed, and there is neither sound nor motion.

He listened for a voice, but he heard only the beating of his heart.

He started up and called aloud; he stamped his feet upon the crusted snow, and his cry and footfall sounded like thunder in his ears. He moaned in his desolation, "I am surely crazed." He wrung his hands in agony, and ran along the mountain crest, he knew not whither. He paused and looked around, and heard again the beating of his heart. He called to the phantoms of the air to come back and wake him in this silence that was more terrible than they.

He started on again, and tried in his bewilderment to find his previous foot-marks; but the drifting snow had covered them. He was completely lost, and fled in terror from himself.

He came to rugged places in the ice—to clefts that were unfathomable. He sprang



PAUL IN THE ICE CAVERN.

them as a wild man, reckless of everything.

Then his senses all forsook him. He heard no longer the beating of his heart, or his heavy foot-fall; and he was enveloped in the heavy gloom of night.

His sight returned, and he was in a cavern,—vast and interminable,—filled with an atmosphere of deepest blue. A flood of light was pouring into it, and on a multitude of pendent cones, on sharp angles of the wall, and cones that projected upward from the floor, the light was blazing in the brightest hues of gold and crimson and deep purple.

He looked upon the dazzling spectacle, and it changed. The cones and corners of the cavern that had gleamed so brightly were transformed to shapes that he had seen upon

the mountain top, and in the very centre of the cavern came out in glowing whiteness the face, and away beyond, until it vanished into space, the form of the spirit that had spoken to him.

But all was still and motionless. He spoke, but his voice died away and left no echo. He called to the Goblin, but received no answer.

And then the brightness died away, the Goblin seemed to sink into the earth, the phantom shapes all vanished once again, and the man lay prostrate like one in a dark and silent tomb, as if he were a part of the same dead nature that had terrified him.

VII.

WHEN Carl and Tabita returned and reported in the village that the strange man had set out to climb the Linmark's fjeld, everybody pitied him; but since they knew they could not help the rash adventurer, they did not try. With one accord they gave him over to destruction; all except Tabita, who, as soon as she could steal away, hastened to the Galdraken, confident that, since she had been instrumental in saving her Carl, why might she not now rescue Paul? Thoughtful and faithful girl! But her efforts were without avail, so far at least as appeared to her.

A week passed, and still no tidings of the missing man. Then the ship which brought him sailed for home, carrying the information of his loss; and something else besides, that the people in the village knew not of, which the Galdraken got on board by stealth.

"What is it, good mother?" asked the captain.

The Galdraken was not prone to answer any one directly. "It is not a sword, and yet it wins a victory; it is not an ointment, yet it heals a wound."

The summer passed away, the sun sank down behind the hills, until it did not rise at all, and would not for two months, almost. Light snow took the place of the green grass and flowers and foliage of the valley; but while the storms raged fiercely on the top of Linmark's fjeld, and out at sea, the wind calmly blew over the peaceful village. The villagers drew around their happy firesides;

and, free from care, in the fullness of their love they were gay and cheerful in the arctic night.

But there was one sad heart in the Governor's house: it was Annie Vardsen's, for nothing yet was known of Paul, who had enchanted her; there was a heavy heart at the Factor's: it was Ida Lansen's, for her lover Jens could not come to her, and was struggling against great poverty; there was one anxious heart at Tabita's: it was the heart of Tabita herself; for her Lively Carl was going upon a long journey.

Lively Carl was the public carrier, and every winter when the ice had formed it was his duty to go two hundred miles to another village, where a ship came later in the year, after having made the voyage to the village of the Island. This journey was performed with dogs and sledge.

"Dear Carl, be careful of yourself, and don't forget to come back by Christmas day, which you know will be our wedding-day," said Tabita, hanging on his neck as he was going; just as if there was any chance of his forgetting it! Then she said, "Now don't forget to stop as you come back at the Galdraken's either, and do besides just what she tells you, Carl."

"Oh no, I won't forget it, no, not if she were a thousand times a witch—of course I won't." Then she kissed him for his promise, wound a huge comforter about his neck, and sent him out into the night with plenty of bright hopes and happy memories to keep him warm for at least twice two hundred miles, even if indeed he might not have gone clear round the arctic circle without a chill.

She watched him from her little window as he drove away, and after he was out of sight her ear followed him by the creaking of his sledge upon the crusted snow, by his cheerful voice, speaking to his team, and by the cracking of his whip. She placed a light beside her in the window, that he might, if he looked back (as he was sure to do), see her face beside it; and when there was no longer any hope that he could see her or the light, she sent after him into the vacant night a loving kiss from her little finger-tips.

Then she went to Annie Vardsen and

placed a scrap of folded paper in her hand. "What is it?" asked Miss Annie, quite too much a woman to open it and let it tell its own tale for itself. "I may not tell," replied Tabita. "Where then did you get it?"—"That I may not tell either." After which she went away. Having no longer a reasonable excuse for delay, Annie Vardsen unfolded the paper, and from it fell a lock of hair—Paul's hair, she thought at once. Lost Paul! and a tear fell from her eye upon it. "But how," she thought, "could it come in this mysterious way?" But she had not yet exhausted the paper, for upon looking at it again she discovered two brief lines written in a rude though legible manner, which thus commanded:—

"Upon the air thy love declare,
And fling a lock of thy brown hair."

A strange command and strangely brought—what could it mean? But without pausing to consider, and feeling for the instant as if under the influence of some spell or power beyond herself, she opened the window and into the vacant night, where Tabita's kiss had gone, she flung a lock to match the one she held, and a moment afterward wished she had not done it.

Lively Carl was by this time well away upon his journey, and five days thereafter he was at the end of it. But he was detained four days by storms, and deep snows, interrupting him upon the homeward track, he was much beyond his time in reaching the peaceful valley. Great anxiety was felt for him by everybody; by Tabita especially, who was, of course, afraid that something might have happened to him, or that he would not be home in time to marry her on Christmas day; and by Annie Vardsen, too, who felt that his coming would in some way reveal the mystery of Paul's fate.

But he was coming safe and sound, and very lively, too. In the pocket of his coat he carried great packages of letters, and on the sledge, well wrapped up, small parcels. He was, however, not a bit too soon, for it was late on Christmas eve when he crawled out from underneath the heavy shadow of the great tall cliff at the foot of Linmark's fjeld, and stopped his team in the bright moonlight,

near the Galdraken's hut. The stillness of the night quite filled him with a sense of coming mischief, and his close proximity to a place of doubtful character, the great ghostly shadows of himself and sledge and dogs that trailed away upon the snow, to say nothing of the Goblin of the Ice on Linmark's fjeld, that was so near to him, had such an effect on his mind that he fairly shivered, and that, too, without respect to the state of the thermometer. "I wish," he muttered to himself, "this business were well over. I like it not;" but then, inspired by the praises which were so near from Tabita, he crossed the bridge which spanned the yawning chasm and stood before the Galdraken's door. Just then he heard the draw-bridge fall, and he shook from head to foot with fright, and wished heartily he was at home. "Oh, dreadful; I am a prisoner in the witch's den," he cried.

A deep voice from the inside called to him: "Enter, and have no fear;" so plucking up his courage he crossed the threshold, to find himself before a roaring fire that sent his shadow dancing about the otherwise darkened room. "Well," muttered Lively Carl, "this is no witch's fire, at any rate," and he warmed himself before it, thinking at the same time that in such a place he must be still and ask no questions. After a few moments the same voice which had before spoken issued this peremptory command: "Leave the packet for Paul Peverell, and go."

At first he thought to deny having any such a thing about him; but then, remembering his promise to Tabita, and being glad enough to get away on almost any terms, he drew the packet out from his wallet, and, dropping it, immediately proceeded to perform the remaining part of the command.

The bridge was up ready for him, and, crossing it with two bounds, he made for the place where he had left his team. But it was not there. He called to the dogs separately: "Here Rothe, here Swort, here Bruin," but they did not answer him, and he could find no sledge tracks to indicate the direction they had taken. He was in a state of great perplexity. "Witchcraft and sorcery for certain!" he exclaimed, of which he was not the less convinced when he seemed

to hear some one whispering to him: "Go home, and find them there." He looked about him, but could see no one; and now, almost beside himself with fright, and not knowing how soon he might be carried off himself, he took the hint of the mysterious whisperer and set out for the village at his highest speed. He did not venture to look behind him for some time, feeling confident that he was pursued, and when he did, what sound was that which greeted him! He saw nothing; but the most dismal cry that he had ever heard broke upon him through the still night air. It sounded something like the cry of dogs. Could it be his team? Oh, no! The cry was too wild and loud for anything so real. From that moment he slackened not his pace, and never did Lively Carl show such a lively pair of heels.

The cry grew louder. It was nearing him. He looked back over his shoulder, and down the hillside by which he was approaching the village he saw a spectral pack coming, as it seemed to him, through the air. Escape by running was hopeless. He dropped behind a clump of rocks, and they passed on. "Thank God, they are not in pursuit of me," he exclaimed, in excess of gratitude.

Looking up after they had passed he made out what seemed to be a team of dogs and a sledge, with two figures upon it—witches or demons of some sort, as he firmly believed. One of the figures dropped from the sledge. "I'm good for one at any rate," said he, and approached it. It rose up, and limping towards him addressed him in a well-known voice. He wheeled about and fled once more. "Carl, Carl, come back, it's only me!" but Carl did not heed the summons.

The people heard the dismal cry which had so frightened Carl. The sound drew nearer, and the timid fled into their houses, not knowing what was going to happen. Presently they detected dogs and sledge, and some one cried, "The Galdraken." The dogs bounded for their kennel, and then they were seen to be the Lively Carl's. They had run howling in terror from the Galdraken, who was driving them, or rather following them upon the sledge as they fled homewards.



A SPECTRAL PACK.

But where was Carl? Before they had time to ask, the Galdraken had disappeared. Tabita was on the watch, and met her in a secluded place behind the village. "All's well; and thy lover is no laggard," said the Galdraken to her. "The other will not come unless he knows that the boy's brother has arrived, and that his pale-faced love has received and read this;" saying which she placed a paper in Tabita's hands, with these instructions:—"Take it to her, and when she has read it, swing the lamp three times before the window. The boy will be here, I know; but to convince him, repeat the signal." And then she disappeared.

Lively Carl soon came running into the village, as pale as a ghost himself, declaring that he had seen the ghost of Paul Perevell; that

a witch had run off with his team; at which the people laughed heartily, and to add to the poor man's confusion, they pointed out his dogs, all well and sound, his sledge and precious cargo safe.

Meanwhile the ghost was watching for the light in Ida's window. Behind that same window there was a much astonished girl, for Ida Lansen held in her hand a paper which made her lover heir to one-half the Peverell estates in Denmark, with an inscription on the back of it which said: "From one who, in his selfishness, has wronged you both, and owns it willingly."

Three times the lamp was swung, and the ghost that Carl had seen took note of it.

Then Ida Lansen flew down stairs, for she heard a voice she well knew; and Jens Peverell caught her in his arms.

"Why, how is this?" said Jens, who had just arrived, all wrapped in furs and white with frost. "I thought that you were ill, my love, and I came in haste all these fifty miles at fearful risk, for the ice is bad. This I received but yesterday." And he produced a rhymed epistle, as mysterious in its character and the manner of its appearance as was Ida's document. Then Ida gave him hers, and he was happy, not to say astonished.

Again the lamp was swung, and had any one been upon the hill-side to see, the ghost that frightened Carl would have been observed to lean on the Galdraken's arm, and hasten by a secluded path to Tabita's house, where Lively Carl had already come, received reward, and been ordered off; for Tabita wished to receive the ghost alone. When this was done, and the ghost had been provided for, she fetched the Governor, who, when he saw the ghost sitting in Tabita's room, was about to run away as Carl had done; but the ghost put out a hand and said: "Don't be alarmed, I am Paul Peverell."

VIII.

TABITA'S hut was filled that night as it had never been before, after the news had spread of the dead restored to life. Jens, with Ida by his side, came and brought along with them the paper that had so mysteriously fallen into their hands, and after years of separation the

brothers were reconciled. The Governor's family, the factor's family, and the priest were there; in fact all the village, one by one, passed in and out, each eager to have a look at the man who had dared to face the Rana-mee. Paul said: "You see, good people, I have done it; and although much hurt, am not a cripple, thanks to the Galdraken, who found me where I had fallen on the ice, and carrying me upon her back insensible to her hut, nursed me there as if I were a child. She has shown me what a truly noble heart is hidden in the breast of that strange inhabitant of the solitary hut. But think not to do as I have done. Stay in the peaceful valley, friends, and by your quiet lives defy the Goblin of the Ice, rather than beard him on his throne."

They answered, "We have no wish to try!"

Then Paul had something to tell each one that stood around.

To Ida Lansen he said: "Your words, cold and cruel, I remembered well while I lay there in agony in the Galdraken's hut, and had barely strength to write the message which the Galdraken took on board the ship, and which has resulted in this happy change."

To Jens he said: "Forgive me, brother." And he joined the lovers' hands, and made them plight their troth before him, and pronounce the "*Trulofa*," and tie the true love knot.

To the Governor he said: "I would have come to you long ago, but as I lay there suffering, I thought how just had been the charges Ida made against me, and I scarcely dared to see your family until the packet came from Denmark which enabled me to do her and her lover justice." And he said something, too, about his daughter, Annie Vardsen.

He said to Annie Vardsen: "Annie, will you own to me now what you owned to the cold winds when you flung this lock of rich brown hair away upon the night?" And he put into her hand the token which the Galdraken had adroitly got for him. Then he told her how he was coming back to her, and what prevented him; how just it was that he should suffer for his selfishness; and how from the first he loved her, but had grown so self-willed by unrestricted liberty, that he would not

yield even to the prompting of his better nature.

Then Annie Vardsen said, in answer, blushing deeply, and looking down: "I will indeed confess what I confessed to the wind and night;" And there was another "*Trulofa*" said then and there.

Another, too; but that was needless, yet Paul insisted on it: and the Lively Carl, now well recovered from his fright, and Tabita, happy with the good that she had done and the happiness she saw in others, partly through her efforts, stood forth and plighted troth again. And so there were three brides-to-be, all there that night, in the happy home of Tabita.

To make the circle quite complete, only the Galdraken, who had served them all so well, was wanting. Nowhere could she be found; though presently a voice was heard outside the window, droning the rude prophetic rhyme which Paul had heard on his way to the mountain.

"True, true!" cried Paul, when it was finished. "True, good mother! for surely that is your voice. Stay, stay, I beg of you!" And he, with all the other inmates of the house, tried to detain her; but they found it impossible to detain what they could neither see nor further hear.

Then, the hour being nearly midnight, they parted, to give way for Kris Kringle on his merry round.

And, when they had all gone out, the once proud, ambitious Paul fell down upon his knees and wept, and in his heart of hearts thanked God for the change that in His mercy He had wrought upon him, through much suffering. For the first time in his life he felt that he was happy, and to Heaven, in humility, he gave the praise.

But Kris Kringle—what of him? Ah! what a round he made that night with his reindeer steeds, which he had caught in that very valley by the village; and as he glided over the house-tops round the world he was heard humming to himself a song that he had heard the Spirit of the Valley sing away up there in the Arctic night; and the song said there are goblins everywhere except where love and contentment reigned.

And what blessings did he not shower upon

the villagers before he left ! What stockings did he not fill ! what fruit that could be wished for did he not hang upon the village Christmas tree, which grew, nobody could imagine how ! The skeptical said the tree was patchwork—that it did not grow at all, but was made by Paul and Jens 'and Lively Carl. They said, besides (people will be unreasonable, even there), that the heavy cargo on Carl's sledge, which seemed to be (that is, to skeptics) fresh from Denmark, had something to do with the making of the crop of fruit it bore.

But the best of all was the dower which each of these bright maidens found, when she awoke, beneath her pillow. Then what a time there was when she came from her chamber to find a lover waiting to lead her to the little church, which was one blaze of light, and festooned all round with garlands of sweet juniper ; and what a gay procession round the church, each bridegroom carrying a torch that threw weird shadows on the snow, and made every crystal glitter on the landscape far away ; each bride with something in her hand to bestow upon the village girls who crowded round and begged a token for good luck in marriage.

And what a merry Christmas the villagers all had that day—feasting, singing, rivalling each other in good offices of love and fellowship. When the evening came the Governor's

doors were thrown wide open to all who could crowd in ; and with Lively Carl and Tabita to lead, they danced the hours away.

The Governor proved himself as lively as the youngest, for he laid away his pipe to have a turn around the room with Tabita. The priest even could not resist temptation, and Lively Carl had once more to stand aside. The baby Elizabeth, too, joined in, as if she understood it all.

They would have had the Galdraken there (no one thought her evil now), but, as usual, she could not be found. To the very last she delighted in her mystery. They went in procession to her hut ; but all was dark, and the bridge was down. They called, and woke the echoes ; but the Galdraken did not answer. Yet—"Hark, hark !" said Tabita ; "the Spirit of the Valley ! hear her sing !" And sweet music floated away upon the crisp night air. The words were words of hope and promise.

The sweet voice died away, and the music of the waterfall was all they heard. They answered with a song of love, and while they sang they returned to the village over the moon-lit snow, none better satisfied than Paul Peverell, that happiness is to be found in the valley, and not upon the mountain top ; and he smiled to think, while he held his bride upon his arm, that he and not the Goblin was the victor after all !